

Hymns: 13 In the Garden 15 It Is Well with My Soul
Scripture: Psalm 46

Big Idea: Keep a Spiritual Focus

On April 15th, at 6:20 p.m. French time, the roof of the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, burst into flames. The cause of the fire has still not been determined. The consensus opinion of the cause is electrical from wiring used in a renovation. It took 400 firefighters to extinguish the blaze. Two-thirds of the roof was destroyed, but the building and relics inside were otherwise saved.

That got me thinking. What does Notre Dame mean anyway? According to Wikipedia, Note Dame is French for “Our Lady.” In the world of the Catholic Church there is no confusion regarding to whom *Our Lady* refers. She is Mary, the mother of Jesus or as the Catholics say, the Virgin Mary.

Last time, on Mother’s Day, we looked at the person and life of Mary. We learned she was a cognitive person (a thinker), humble, obedient, and godly. Her life was marked with **incredible** highs and **devastating** lows. When we encountered difficult issues related to her interaction with her Son, Jesus, we deferred them till next time. That time has arrived. We want to look at these passages today and try to better understand what they mean. We will take them in chronological order.

We’ll start with that incident when Jesus at age twelve stayed behind in Jerusalem and his parents searched for Him three days.

Luke 2

[48] And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

[49] And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? [Did] ye not [know] that I must be about my Father's business?

[50] And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

This one should be pretty easy if we simply recall that Jesus had a heavenly perspective rather than an earthly one. He was speaking of His **Heavenly** Father. His parents were thinking He was referring to His earthy (step) father. This was despite Mary having been told by the angel Gabriel that He would be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35) and Joseph was told by the angel of the Lord that He was conceived of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 1:20).

Jesus knew He must study and understand God’s word. There was much to learn in Jerusalem. He stayed behind for that purpose. So our first difficult saying related to not recognizing Jesus’ **spiritual perspective**.

Our next set of difficult sayings of Jesus occurred as He began His ministry:

John 2

[1] And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was

there:

[2] And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.

*[3] And when they wanted wine,
the mother of Jesus sai[d] unto him,*

They have no wine.

[4] Jesus sai[d] unto her,

Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.

[5] His mother sai[d] unto the servants,

Whatsoever he sa[ys] unto you, do it.

Our first problem in this passage involves Jesus use of the word *woman*. Would that have sounded strange to his mother Mary? Yes, it would have sounded as it does to us. He was not being disrespectful. He was instead distancing Himself from her. Note both the two angels and Jesus Himself addressed Mary Magdalene the same way at the empty tomb (John 20:13,15) after Jesus rose from the dead.

Let's look at that touching passage and observe how the resurrected Jesus addresses Mary Magdalene.

John 20

*[11] But Mary [Magdalene] stood [outside] the sepulchre weeping:
and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,*

*[12] And [she saw] two angels in white sitting,
the one at the head, and the other at the feet,
where the body of Jesus had lain.*

[13] And they sa[id] unto her,

Woman, *why weepest thou?*

She sai[d] unto them,

*Because they have taken away my Lord,
and I know not where they have laid him.*

*[14] And when she had thus [spoken],
she turned [around], and **saw Jesus standing**,
and knew not that it was Jesus.*

[15] Jesus sai[d] unto her,

Woman, *why weepest thou?*

whom seekest thou?

Jesus was intentionally speaking in a manner to distance Himself from His beloved friend and devoted follower.

She, supposing him to be the gardener, sai[d] unto him,

Sir, if [you have carried Him away], tell me where [you have] laid him, and I will take him away.

*[16] Jesus sai[d] unto her, **Mary**.*

She turned herself, and sai[d] unto him,

Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

Note the clear distinction between Jesus addressing Mary in non-familiar terms and then addressing her by name. As we have seen repeatedly in this study, we must pay close attention to **each word** Jesus says. He intentionally used *woman* first to **conceal** His identity and then used the name *Mary* to **reveal** His close relationship to her.

Does scripture contain any reference where Jesus calls Mary *mother* or even Joseph his father? No, He never does. The closest is when He assigns the care of His mother to John from the cross.

John 19

*[26] When Jesus therefore saw his mother,
and the disciple standing by, whom he loved,
he saith unto his mother, **Woman**, behold thy son!
[27] Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!
And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.*

Even in His parting words to Mary from the cross, Jesus addresses her as *woman*. However, He describes her to the Apostle John to be considered John's *mother*.

Who then does Jesus refer to when He refers to His Father?

John 17

*[1] These words spake Jesus,
and lifted up his eyes to **heaven**,
and said, **Father**,
the hour is come;
glorify thy Son,
that thy Son also may glorify thee:*

This verse gives us even more insight into our second difficult passage. Just as in the first, so in the second (and many others), Jesus speaks of His **Heavenly** Father when He refers to *His Father*.

So let's move on to the next difficult saying in the Cana wedding story. Mary, the thinker, noticed that they had no wine at the wedding. She knew Jesus was starting His ministry. What better place for Him to declare and demonstrate that He was the Messiah – the King who had come to set up His everlasting kingdom as Gabriel had announced to her (Luke 1:32-33). No doubt the prospect of this announcement excited Mary greatly. That would finally **silence** those who **ridiculed** her and Jesus regarding her claim that He was **virgin born**.

When Mary told Jesus, He could read her heart and likely see her excitement. He addressed her as *woman*. That should have taken some wind out of her sails. He proceeded to say in effect "What shall I do with you?"

When I was a boy, my mom would say something like that in exasperation to my brother and me right before saying she was going to give us back to the Indians. Jesus used the expression to put Mary in her

place.

Then He explained to her that His “hour is not yet come.” What *hour* is He talking about? In the Gospels, we find Jesus used that expression frequently. Our John 17:1 verse is sufficient as Jesus told us when it had arrived. His hour was when He would again be glorified. The cross was the gateway to His fulfilling His redemptive mission and returning to glory. Of course, Mary did not understand that, but she did know she needed to back off and let Jesus handle things. Her last recorded words in scripture testify to that as she steps away and tells the staff to follow Jesus’ directions.

Let’s now quickly review an incident that we covered over a year ago in message fourteen of this study of the Dispensation of Law as we kicked off our Difficult Sayings of Jesus sub-series since this too involves Mary.

Jesus was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum (John 6:59) early in His ministry. He went up there first. Capernaum is on the north shore of the lake of Galilee about 30 miles from where He grew up in Nazareth.

Just before that, we learned that Jesus’ stepfather Joseph was still living (John 6:42). Still in the same general location and time-frame we read this:

Matthew 12

[46] While he [that is, Jesus] ... talked to the people, ...

There was a crowd that surrounded Him as He taught in a building – likely a synagogue.

*[47] Then one said unto him,
Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand [outside],*

They were trying to get in through the crowd that thronged Jesus as He was teaching.

desiring to speak with thee.

[48] But he answered and said unto him ...,

Who is my mother?

and who are my brethren?

[49] And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said,

Behold my mother and my brethren!

*[50] For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven,
the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*

That’s some pretty strange and heavy stuff.

By the way, this incident was recorded in **all three** of the synoptic gospels (Matthew 12:46-50, Mark 3:31-35, and Luke 8:19-21). It must be pretty important. Jesus ignores His family and lowers their status to beneath that of His disciples. Why did He do that?

Jesus' family knew He had left home to execute the mandate of His **earthly ministry**. This is a key phrase: *earthly ministry*. We need to keep that in mind. He was resolute in that single mission: to minister to and then redeem fallen man. Anyone following Him must join Him. He had **no tolerance** for **anything** or **anyone** that would hinder Him in accomplishing this. He **demanded** this level of commitment.

Of course, **what** He demanded from His followers, He required also of Himself. He practiced what He preached. He would not be distracted by family matters. Do you remember the man talked about burying his father (Luke 9:59-60)?

I believe this is when Joseph died or was on his deathbed. That's why Jesus' mother and brothers traveled 30 miles and tried desperately to interrupt him that day. While Jesus loved His family, His mission superseded them.

Keep in mind too that we learn in John 7:5 that even Jesus own brothers who grew up with Him did not believe in Him. And what about His neighbors – those who knew Him growing up?

Matthew 13

*[57] And they were **offended** [by] him.
But Jesus said unto them,
A prophet is not without honour, [except]
in his **own** country,
and in his **own** house.*

So His own **brothers** didn't believe in Him and neither did his neighbors. John tells us that Jesus first miracle was performed when He turned water to wine at Cana, so we know He did no miracles before He entered His ministry.

Now let's move on to another very familiar **difficult** passage:

While we're on the topic of Jesus' relationship to His family, here are two more incidents. First,

Luke 1

*[41] And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe [John the Baptist] leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:
[42] And she sp[o]ke out with a loud voice, and said,
Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.*

Luke 11

*[27] And it came to pass,
as he [that is, Jesus] sp[o]ke ...,
a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him,*

*Blessed is the womb that bare thee,
and the [breasts at] which thou hast [nursed].*

*[28] But he said,
Yea rather,
blessed are they that hear the word of God,
and keep it.*

Here's that family thing again – referring to His mother. How did He respond? He changed the focus from the **physical** to the **spiritual**.

This verse must be particularly troubling to those branches of Christianity that seek to elevate Mary. Fundamentalists often overreact in the opposite direction toward her. In any event, Jesus had no place for this kind of thing.

The key to this verse is the Greek word:

me-nü'n

The word appears four times in scripture. In the King James Version it is translated four different ways:

1. yea, rather (in this verse)
2. nay, but
3. yea, verily
4. yea, doubtless

If we go with what the KJV translators chose, Jesus acknowledges Mary is blessed as both the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:28) and Elizabeth (v.42) said to her. But He then elevates those who follow God's word above her. That is consistent with the way Jesus views things.

Application

Again today we saw that most of these difficult sayings could be understood if we just kept a **spiritual perspective**. That's true in life as well isn't it?. We seem to get so wrapped up in the things of this world that we lose focus.

We've all had trials in life. Many of us likely are going through some right now. While health and financial problems are difficult, I believe the most distressing of all involve conflicts related to other people and especially loved ones. Where do you turn when these fires of hell threaten to consume you? God has provided an escape.

I John 2

*[15] Love not the world,
neither the things that are in the world.*

*If any man love the world,
the love of the Father is not in him.
[16] For all that is in the world,
the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,
Is not of the Father, but is of the world.
[17] And **the world passeth away**, and the lust thereof:
but he that doeth the will of God **abideth for ever**.*

The problems of this world need never overwhelm us as we keep our focus on the things of the Lord and the glorious future we have with Him.

Benediction

*[24] Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling,
and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,
[25] To the only wise God our Saviour,
be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.*

© Ron Harrod, 2019.

This document may be reproduced for noncommercial use only.